

Integrating Thomistic Christology and Contemporary Biblical Scholarship on Christ the New David

A. Jesus as the Shepherd-King in Luke

Old Testament (1 & 2 Samuel; Narratives of the Davidic Kingdom; Prophetic Texts) ¹	Luke's References to the Davidic Kingdom
Elkanah and Hannah (1 Samuel 1-2)	Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1)
Davidic covenant text (2 Samuel 7:1-17)	Gabriel's description of Jesus' to Mary in a Davidic way (Luke 1:32-33)
Hannah's song (1 Samuel 2:1-10)	Magnificat and Benedictus (Luke 1: 46-55)
	Jesus legal father was of the "house of David" (Luke 1:27)
	Jesus' birthplace emphasized as the City of David (Luke 2:4; 2:11)
Prophecy of the coming Shepherd King (Micah 5: 1-3)	Shepherds as the first witnesses to the Son of David's birth (Luke 2:8-20)
Young Samuel's message of judgement (1 Samuel 3:10-18)	John the Baptist's preaching (Luke 3:7-9); Jesus' warnings of judgment
David's anointing (1 Samuel 16:13)	Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:21-22)
Royal psalm: "You are my Son" (Psalm 2:7)	Jesus' baptism: "You are my beloved Son" (Luke 3:22); again at the Transfiguration
	Jesus' geneology is traced through the line of David (Luke 3:22-28)
David's battle with Goliath (1 Samuel 17)	Jesus' battle with Satan (Luke 4:1-13)
David's travels with his band of followers (1 Samuel 19-30)	Jesus' travels with his followers (Luke 9:51-19:28)
	Jesus is addressed as the "Son of David" by the blind man at Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
	Jesus as the Shepherd-King who seeks and saves what is lost (Luke 19:1-10)

¹ Adapted from: Sarah (Lecturer) Harris, *The Davidic Shepherd King in the Lukan Narrative*, 1st ed., vol. 558;558., Book, Whole (New York: Bloomsbury T and T Clark, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9780567667366>; Scott Hahn, "Kingdom and Church in Luke-Acts: From Davidic Christology to Kingdom Ecclesiology," in *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, Joel B. Green, and Anthony C. Thiselton, The Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, v. 6 (Milton Keynes, UK : Grand Rapids, Mich: Paternoster Press ; Zondervan, 2005), 294–324; N. T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God. Vol. 1: The New Testament and the People of God*, Nachdr., vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

Zechariah's prophecy of the coming eschatological king (Zechariah 9:9-10)	Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a colt (Luke 19: 26-40)
Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant, with Israel and Judah united under the Davidic monarchy (Jeremiah 31)	References to the new covenant in the Eucharistic Institution Narrative (Luke 22:14-23)
	Davidic titles in the Passion narrative: "King of the Jews" (Luke 23: 37-38); "Chosen One" (Luke 23:35)

Nature of the Davidic Monarchy²:

- 1) the Davidic monarchy was founded upon a divine covenant;
- (2) was the Son of God;
- (3) the Christ;
- (4) was linked to Jerusalem, particularly Mount Zion;
- (5) was bound to the temple;
- (6) ruled over the twelve tribes;
- (7) ruled over an international empire; and
- (8) was everlasting.

B. The New David in the Gospel of St. John

David is mentioned only once directly in St. John's gospel; however, other Davidic references/echoes are present

Old Testament (1 & 2 Samuel; Narratives of the Davidic Kingdom; Prophetic Texts)³	Gospel of St. John
2 Samuel 15-18 – David's betrayal by his son Absalom (betrayal by a close confidant, Ahithophel advises seizing David by night so that followers will flee, David ascends with his followers to the Mount of Olives).	Contains intertextual references to 2 Samuel 15-18 (Jesus is betrayed by a close confidant, he is seized at night, his followers flee, Jesus is at the Mount of Olives on the night of his arrest)
Ahithophel counsels those who follow Absalom to "seek the life of only one man [David], and all the people will be at peace" (2 Sam 17:3).	Caiaphas advises that "it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people" so that "the whole nation should not perish" (Jn 11:50).
God's covenant with Solomon as the Davidic Son- "I will be his father, and he	Jesus is the true Davidic Son; emphasized in the Farewell Discourse – e.g., "I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the

² Hahn, "Kingdom and Church in Luke-Acts: From Davidic Christology to Kingdom Ecclesiology."

³ Matthew Levering, *Reconfiguring Thomistic Christology*, Current Issues in Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

shall be my son; I will not take my merciful love from him.” (1 Chronicles 17:13)	world may know that I love the Father” (Jn 14:31).
	St. John’s passion narrative repeatedly emphasizes that Jesus is king- “the King of the Jews” (Jn 18:39); “Hail, King of the Jews!” (Jn 19:3); “Here is your King! ... Shall I crucify your King?” (Jn 19:14–15); “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (Jn 19:19); “This man said, ‘I am King of the Jews’” (Jn 19:21)
	Jesus burial is presented as a royal burial - “Nicodemus ... came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds’ weight” (Jn 19:39)

C. Excerpt from OSANNA FILIO DAVID (Advent)⁴

(2) Let us take a look at his origin. You should know that in the Old Testament salvation was promised in two ways: first, by someone who would be born from the stem of David, where it says: “In those days I will save Judah and I will raise for David a just shoot” [Jer 23.5]. And elsewhere salvation is promised to them in the coming of the Lord, as it says in Is 35.4: “The Lord himself will come, and he will save you.” Thus the crowds smartly connected these two: that he who will be from the seed of David will save us and that the Lord will save us in his coming. (2.1) As they were calling him “Son of David” [Mt 21.9], they called to mind his humanity; (2.2) they called to mind his divinity as they were saying: “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” [Mt 21. 9].⁴⁴ (2.1) See that David bears the image of Christ in three respects: 45 (2.1.1) first, as for the royal sovereignty; (2.1.2) second, as for the victory of wars; (2.1.3) third, as for grace.

(2.1.1) As for the royal sovereignty, David bears the image of Christ. Know that David was the first accepted king of God in Israel [cf. 1 Sm 16]; and concerning Christ it is said: “The Lord will give him the throne of David, his father” [Lk 1.32].

(2.1.2) Second, David bears the image of Christ as for the victory of wars, because he was victorious in war. Hence it says in Ps 144.1: “Blessed is the Lord my God, who schools my hands for the battle (and my fingers for war).” And [Christ] was especially victorious because he completely conquered the powers of the air and led “the defeated out of the lake in which there is no water” [Zec 9.11].

(2.1.3) Third, David bears the image of Christ as for grace.

⁴ Excerpt from: Thomas Aquinas, “Sermon 04 OSANNA FILIO DAVID: Another Sermon on Advent,” in *The Academic Sermons (the Fathers of the Church, Mediaeval Continuation, Volume 11)*, ed. Mark-Robin Hoogland, The Fathers of the Church, Mediaeval Continuation 11 (Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 46–61.

Thus says the Lord about David: "I have found a man after my heart" [1 Sm 13.14, Ps 89.21]; whereas the Lord says about Christ: "This is my beloved (dilectus) Son (in whom I am well pleased)." Moreover, we find that David had love (caritas), whence it says: "I made peace with those who hated peace (when I spoke to them; they pursued me without reason)" [Ps 119.7 (Vg)]. Furthermore: "If I have given what is due to those who repaid me with evil things" [Ps 7.5]. Hence he was mild, in accordance with this: "Remember, Lord, David and all his mildness" [Ps 132.1]. He had humility as well. Hence he said: "Lord, my heart is not proud" [Ps 131.1]. Also Christ was mild and humble. Thus he said to his disciples in Mt 11.29: "Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart." So, by calling to mind the humility of Christ, the crowds said: "To the Son of David."

(2.2) Next, as for the recognition of his divinity, it says: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Well, see that Christ comes in the name of the Lord in a threefold manner: (2.2.1) First, in the truth of the divine name. For when a generation is perfect, what is generated receives the nature and the name of the one who generates. So, because the generation of Christ was perfect, therefore Christ received the nature of the divinity from the Father as well as the name. Hence the Apostle says: "He has given him a name that is above every name" [Phil 2.9], the name of the divinity, that is. So, he comes first in the truth of the divine name.

(2.2.2) Second, he comes in the strength of the divine name.

Hence we read in Prv 18.10: "A very strong tower is the name of the Lord; (the just runs to him and will be exalted)." In natural things the strength of a cause does not have an effect unless it is applied [cf. Jn 15.4]; in this way, everything that the saints have done is entirely done in the strength of the name of the Lord [cf. Is 26.12, Phil 2.13].

(2.2.3) Furthermore, he comes, thirdly, in the manifestation of the divine name.

Therefore he says: "Father, I have manifested your name to the people" [Jn 17.6]. Now the task of the Savior and his origin are clear.

D. Excerpts from *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*⁵

2374 Now the Evangelist shows us Christ being ridiculed: first, the mock honors paid to him; secondly, the real dishonor showed him, **and struck him**. They pay him mock honors by calling him a king, thus adverting to the charge lodged by the Jews, who said that he made himself king of the Jews. Therefore, they pay him the three honors given to a king, but in a derisive way. First, we have a mock crown; and then mock clothing and acclamations.

2375 They mock him with a crown, because it is customary for kings to wear a crown, a crown of gold: "A crown of gold upon his head" [Sir 45:12]. The Psalm (21:3) mentions this: "Thou dost set a crown of fine gold upon his head." **And the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns, and put it on his head**, the head of him who is a crown of glory to those who belong to him: "In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people" (Is 28:5). It was appropriately made of thorns, because by them he removes

⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, trans. Fabian R. Larcher (Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1998), <https://isidore.co/aquinas/english/SSJohn.htm>.

the thorns of sin, which pain us through remorse of conscience: "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns" (Jer 4:3). These thorns also take away the thorns of punishment which burden us: "Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you" (Gen 3:18).

Was this crowning done by the governor's order? Chrysostom says that it was not, but that the soldiers were bribed with money and did this to satisfy the Jews. [2] On the other hand, Augustine says that this was done by the command or the permission of the governor to the end that the hatred of the Jews would be satiated and Pilate could more easily release Jesus. [3]

2376 Secondly, they mock him with clothing. **The soldiers... arrayed him in a purple robe**, which was the sign of a royal dignity for the Romans. In 1 Maccabees (8:14) we read that when the Romans ruled they wore a crown and were clothed in purple. This clothing of Christ in purple fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah (63:2): "Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his that treads in the wine press?" At the same time it indicates the sufferings of the martyrs, which stains red the entire body of Christ, that is, the church.

2377 Thirdly, they mock him the way they address him: **they came up to him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!** It was the custom then, as it is now, for subjects to salute their king when they came into his presence: "And when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, came to Absalom, Hushai said to Absalom, 'Long live the king! Long live the king!'" (2 Sam 16:16).

2418 The Evangelist just told of Christ's crucifixion; now he mentions things that accompanied and followed it: first, as they relate to Pilate; secondly as they relate to the soldiers; and finally, he tells about Christ's friends who were standing by (v 25). Concerning Pilate, we see the title being written on the cross, its being read, and its retention.

2419 Two things are mentioned about the first of these. First, the writing of the title, **Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross**. This was understandable, for it was a way of getting back at the Jews by showing their malice in rising up against their own king. It was also appropriate for this mystery, for just as inscriptions are placed on trophies of victory so the people will remember and celebrate the victory - "Let us make a name for ourselves, before we are scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" [Gen 11:4] - so it was arranged that a title was put on the cross so that the sufferings of Christ would be remembered: "Remember my affliction and my bitterness, the wormwood and the gall!" (Lam 3:19).

2420 Secondly, he mentions the content of the title, **Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews**, words which are very fitting for this mystery of the cross. The word Jesus, which means Savior, corresponds to the power of the cross by which we have been saved: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Mt 1:21). The word Nazareth, which means abounding in flowers, corresponds to the innocence of the one suffering: "I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys" (Song 2:1); "A flower will rise up out of his root" [Is 11:1]. The words **King of the Jews** accord with the power, the dominion, which Christ earned by his

suffering: "Therefore God has highly exalted him" (Phil 2:9); "He shall reign as King and be wise" (Jer 23:5); he will sit "upon the throne of David and over his kingdom" (Is 9:7).

2421 Through his cross Christ is not just the King of the Jews, but of all people - for after we read, "I have set my king on Zion," there follows, "Ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage" (Ps 6:8). Why then did the Evangelist write only **King of the Jews** ? I answer that the Gentiles were grafted on to the abundant olive tree (Rom 11:17). And just like a graft comes to share in the abundance of the olive tree, and it is not the olive tree that acquires the bitterness of the graft, so those Gentiles who were converted to the faith were made spiritually Jews, not by a circumcision of the flesh, but of the spirit. And so in saying the **King of the Jews**, non-Jewish converts are also included.

E. Possible Integrations of New David Christology in the Tertia Pars⁶

Question	Topic	New David Christology
7	Christ's grace and virtue	Righteousness and piety of David
7	Christ's headship	Expansion of references to David to connect more strongly to Christ's Davidic Kingship
46-59	Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension, as well as to his sitting at the right hand of the Father and judiciary power	Deeper integration of Christ reigning and judging as the New David
47, article 2	Suffering and obedience of Christ	David's suffering and obedience in 1 Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and the Psalms

⁶ Levering, *Reconfiguring Thomistic Christology*.